

Pass. Hearing of my return to these parts, he had come to offer his services, and I gladly accepted them, for a more willing, cheery servant I never had. From pony-man he was now promoted to cook. He had no experience of cooking, and these rough hill-men are not the persons one would ordinarily choose for cooks; but, knowing the hardships my men would have to go through, I was determined not to have a man from the plains of India, who might become ill or give in just when his services were most needed. Only men accustomed to "roughing" it could come with me now, and no one could stand hard work better than Shukar Ali. So, although I could not look forward to any very *recherché* dinners while he was at the head of the cooking department, I knew that I should always be sure of a dinner of some sort, and with Shukar Ali as one of the party there would always be a volunteer for hard work when anything specially trying had to be done.

At Leh I was the guest of Captain Ramsay, the British Joint Commissioner, and the same officer whom I mentioned as being Political Agent at Srinagar when I arrived there from Peking.* He had been asked to have ponies ready for me, and to have other necessary arrangements made for my onward journey, and he had done everything so thoroughly that I had little else to do but take over charge. A matter which gave us, however, considerable anxiety was in regard to an additional escort of twenty-five Kashmir Sepoys, who were to be taken on as far as Shahidula. The garrison of Leh was paraded, but it only numbered seventy-nine all told, and was composed of miserable, decrepit old men, thin and half-starved, who looked at me imploringly as I went down the ranks—each one seeming to beseech me not to take him with me, while a look of horror came over each one that I selected. It is impossible to conceive a greater difference than there was between the look and the spirit of the Gurkhas

* Page 211.